

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: SANTA MARTA SUMMIT: PANAMA'S GAINS

REF: BOGOTA 7150

SUMMARY: SANTA MARTA SUMMIT FURTHER RESTATEMENT OF PRIORITY STATUS ACCORDED CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BY LATIN AMERICA. GOP GRASPED OPPORTUNITY OF CHIEFS OF STATE CONFERENCE TO MAINTAIN INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON U.S. OVER CANAL ISSUE, AS WELL AS TO SHIELD ITSELF FROM DOMESTIC IMPATIENCE OVER SLOWDOWN IN NEGOTIATING PACE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE "DECLARATION OF SANTA MARTA" SIGNED BY PRESIDENTS LOPEZ OF COLOMBIA, PEREZ OF VENEZUELA AND PANAMANIAN CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT TORRIJOS OAT CONCLUSION OF THEIR THREE-DAY MEETING IN SANTA MARTA, COLOMBIA ON JULY 29 CONTAINS LITTLE THAT IS NOVEL IN REGARD PANAMA CANAL ISSUE. WITH EXCEPTION OF REQUEST TO PUBLISH MARCH 24, 1975 LETTER OF PRESIDENTS OF COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA AND VENEZUELA TO PRESIDENT FORD, SENTIMENTS, HOPES AND CONCERNS VOICED IN STATEMENT REPEAT THOSE UTTERED IN PREVIOUS CONFERENCES, INSCRIBED IN PRECEDING STATEMENTS AND DECLARATION. THE "DECLARATION" WAS INDEED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT INTENDED TO BREAK NEW GROUND ON THIS MATTER, BUT RATHER TO

PRESS HOME ONCE AGAIN THE SERIOUSNESS OF LATIN AMERICAN CONCERN OVER CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, AND LATIN AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO JUDGE OUR MANAGEMENT OF THEM AS BELLWEATHER FOR HOW WELL OR POORLY WE WILL CONDUCT OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER LA NATIONS.

2. PANAMA HAS UTILIZED ABLY A CONFERENCE WHOSE PRINCIPAL CONCERN WAS DISCUSSION OF VENEZUELAN-COLOMBIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE TO PRESENT ONCE AGAIN ITS CENTRAL PROBLEM, AND ENHANCE THE PRESENTATION OF IT BY THE FREE PUBLICITY OF A SUMMIT, ALBEIT MINI, CONFERENCE. IN EVER LA CONFERENCE TO COME, WHETHER BETWEEN CHIEFS OF STATE OR STUDENTS, THE CANAL ISSUE WILL BE RAISED, AND THE U.S. URGED TO CONCLUDE A NEW TREATY ENDING ITS "COLONIAL ENCLAVE" IN THE CANAL ZONE.

3. THE SANTA MARTA MEETING WILL PROVE POLITICALLY USEFUL TO TORRIJOS DOMESTICALLY. BANNER HEADLINES IN THE LOCAL PRESS, AND LENGTHY COVERAGE DEVOTED TO GENERAL TORRIJOS' STATEMENTS FEND OFF LOCAL CRITICISM OF GOP OVER SLOW PACE OF NEGOTIATIONS. TORRIJOS CAN POINT TO THE MEETING AS ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF THE GOP'S DETERMINATION TO ADVANCE ITS CLAIMS AGAINST THE U.S. IN ALL FORA, THUS KEEPING UP PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON U.S. TO CONCLUDE NEGOTIATION, AND QUICKLY. SANTA MARTA CONFERENCE FOLLOWS HARD ON THE HEELS OF JULY 9 CONFERENCE WITH STUDENT GROUPS AT FORT CIMARRON, AND EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES IN DAVID, JULY 18. BOTH THOSE MEETINGS, WITH SOME SUCCESS, ATTEMPTED TO PLACATE DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF GOP'S HANDLING OF NEGOTIATIONS. PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THIS CONFERENCE REINFORCES TORRIJOS' LOCAL IMAGE AS A LEADER IN LATIN AMERICA'S DRIVE TO LIBERATE ITSELF FROM "DEPENDENCY" ON U.S.
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